

The Price Of Being A Taker

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In the course of my visits to the US, I have met Indians of both Muslim and Hindu communities. I found that senior members of both communities have a common concern: they fear that the future generation is rapidly losing the identity of its traditional culture. Indeed, I have seen that although families of both the communities have achieved substantial material progress, they are unhappy. They feel strongly that their children will suffer a fate commonly known as cultural assimilation.

I told senior members of both communities that their fear might be genuine but their present efforts were not going to yield positive results. The real problem is that both the communities are living in the US as takers and not as givers. Both strive to earn American dollars but they don't try to figure as giver-members of American society. In the course of a conversation, one senior Indian remarked that the present development of America was due mostly to the labour of immigrants. I said, "No, although apparently immigrants seem to be working in the developmental activities of the US, in actual fact the credit goes not to Mr Immigrant but to Mr Incentive."

It is a fact that these immigrants have failed to perform well in their own countries, whereas in the US they are seen to be involved in almost all the activities of development and progress. The reason is that in the US every success is based on merit, so these immigrants become heroes in achieving that success. By taking account of this fact, one can say that the credit goes to Mr Incentive and not to Mr Immigrant.

After Independence, India's economy came under state control—a system whereby every-

thing depended upon state policy. There was no free competition, everything being decided by the state, with the individual entirely subjected to state policy. It must be conceded that a state controlled economy renders people incentive-less and incentive-less people work only as is laid down in rules and regulations and not according to their full and natural capacity.

Visiting the US in 1893, Swami Vivekananda walked along a street in Chicago, clad in two lengths of untailored cloth. At that time in the US, this kind of attire was quite unfamiliar. On seeing this, a woman whispered to her husband, "I don't think that man is a gentleman." Overhearing this remark, Swami Vivekananda said to her politely:

"Excuse me, Madam, in your country it is the tailor who makes a man a gentleman, but in the country from which I come, it is character which makes a man a gentleman."

I narrated this story to an American professor. He smiled and said, "In the past maybe this was Indian culture but now character is an export item for Indians. It is not meant for domestic consumption."

If the Indian community wants to save their next generation, they should try to make themselves a giver-group of American society. If their next generation continues to be taker-members of American society, no effort will ever save them from being assimilated in American culture. If some say they are treated as second-class citizens in the US, it is not due to discriminatory legislation. Even if the law guaranteed equal status for all, Indians would still become second-class citizens because the status of first-class citizen cannot be achieved through legislation. It can be achieved only by assuming the role of giver in society.

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